*208. [The questioner (SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI) was absent. For answer vide page 28 infra.]

Pipeline Gas Service

*209. SHRI R. KAMARAJ: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the increasing demand for cooking gas all over the country;

(b) whether Government are implementing pipeline gas service all over the country in order to avoid delay in supply of LPG; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table.

Statement

(a) Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have registered an average growth rate of 13% in the sales of LPG during the last three years, and it is expected that similar trend may continue in future.

(b) and (c) At present, LPG connections are available on demand throughout the country in all the existing LPG markets and there is no delay in supply of LPG to the registered consumers by the distributors of OMCs. OMCs have also taken initiative to supply LPG through bulk LPG/ cylinder manifold installation (piped/reticulated system) to domestic customers on pilot basis in some of the cities. In the deregulated scenario, OMCs would be free to adopt different modes of supply of LPG to the consumers keeping in view their market interest and customers', needs.

SHRI R. KAMARAJ: Madam, I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether the Government has taken any initiatives/measures to supply LPG through piped system to domestic customers living in municipal and panchayat areas.

SHRI RAM NAIK: Madam, presently, LPG is not available in that much quantity which can be supplied through piped system to the customers living in cities. They are being given natural gas only in two cities, to some extent and also in small cities. It is being given in Delhi, Mumbai, Surat and some other small cities to a limited number of customers. That is natural gas and not LPG.

SHRI R. KAMARAJ: My second supplementary is: What steps are being taken to safeguard the gas supply against any unforeseable happenings like fire, etc.?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Negotiations with Iraq for oil quota

*208. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether government have a proposal to send a team to urge Iraq to raise oil quota;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether imports under 'food for oil' have been dropped; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) No, sir. However, during the 15th session of the Indian — Iraq Joint Commission for economic and technical cooperation held at Baghdad on 6th and 7th July 2002, the issue of supply of Iraqi crude oil to India was discussed.

(c) and (d) Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) had been sourcing crude oil fron M/s. SOMO, the national oil company of Iraq, under the UN approved "Oil for Food" programme upto December 2000. Recently, IOCL has requested M/s. SOMO to allocate crude oil under the "Oil for Food" programme, covering a period of six months from December 2002 onwards.

Artificial filling up of ground water in Gujarat

*210. DR. A. K. PATEL: Will the Miniser of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of sharp decline/shrinking of ground water table in most of the districts in Gujarat specially North Gujarat and Kutch-Saurashtra Region;

(b) if so, whether Government have launched any comprehensive plan to fill the ground water artificially to avoid servere water crisis in dought prone districts of Gujarat:

(c) if so, the funds earmarked for the implementation of the scheme; and